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First Human Case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus in Wisconsin in 2020

State and local public health officials remind everyone to protect themselves against mosquito bites

Eau Claire, WI, September 2, 2020—The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Eau Claire County Health Department today announced that laboratory testing has confirmed the first human case of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus infection this year, in a female under the age of 18 who is a resident of Eau Claire County. As a result, DHS and Eau Claire County Health Department are reminding everyone to protect themselves from mosquito bites by using mosquito repellent any time they are outside.

The news of a human case of EEE comes after the state announced last week that horses in three northwestern Wisconsin counties were infected with the virus. EEE virus is a rare but potentially fatal disease that can affect people of all ages. In Wisconsin, the last human case of EEE was reported in 2017. EEE can be spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire EEE virus by feeding on infected birds. The virus is not spread person to person or directly between animals and humans.

The single best prevention tool continues to be avoiding mosquito bites. “We all have an important role to play in protecting ourselves and our loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes,” said State Health Officer Stephanie Smiley. “Every preventive step we take makes a difference.”

Those prevention measures include:

Avoid Mosquito Bites:

- Apply an insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 to exposed skin and clothing.
- Prior to heading outdoors, treat clothing with permethrin; do not apply permethrin directly to skin.
- Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning hours, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.



Mosquito-Proof Your Home:

- Make sure window and door screens are intact and tightly fitted to prevent mosquitoes from getting into your home.
- Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your home by removing stagnant water from items around your property, such as tin cans, plastic containers, flower pots, discarded tires, roof gutters, and downspouts.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, kiddie pools, buckets, and small boats, such as canoes and kayaks, when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim or mow tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.

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